(a) whether he has visited Sri Lanka recently;

(b) if so, the bilateral issues discussed with the leaders and officials of Sri Lanka during his visit;

(c) the outcome of the discussion held indicating the details thereof;

(d) whether Sri Lankan Government had raised the issue of India's mediation to help resolve the ethnic conflict of the Sri Lanka during the visit; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Yes, Sir. The visit took place from January 19 to 22, 1997 and during this visit, the Third Session of the Indo-Sri Lanka Joint Commission was convened.

(b) and (c) The two sides had a wide ranging exchange of views on various issues of mutual interest and reaffirmed the high priority that they both attach to maintenance of close and cooperative relations.

During the Joint Commission meeting, both sides agreed to take further measures to consolidate and expand bilateral relations in all fields. An Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of investments was signed during the visit. This agreement would provide a legal framework for facilitating greater flow of two way investments. An agreement was also signed to release the second tranche of the Indian line of credit (US $ 15 million) to second tranche of the Indian line of credit (US $ 15 million) to Sri Lanka. Besides, a Cultural Exchange Programme and a Programme of Cooperation in the field of Science and Technology were also concluded during the Joint Commission meeting. During the visit, it was announced that Government of India had decided to open a Cultural Centre in Colombo. The Government's decision to reduce tariffs and remove quantitative restrictions on substantial number of items of export interest to Sri Lanka was conveyed and it was agreed that details would be worked out during a meeting of officials of the Ministries of Commerce of both countries.

India's serious concern about incidents of violence against Indian fishermen was conveyed to the Sri Lankan leaders and the need to find an appropriate mechanism to avoid such incidents in the future was stressed by the Indian side. Both sides agreed to hold official level talks on fishery issues in the near future. The Sri Lankan Government conveyed that it would release from custody 25 Indian fishermen who had been found in Sri Lankan waters and against whom there were no security related charges.

It was also agreed to hold talks on the need to find a permanent solution to the problems faced by the operators of sailing vessels plying between Tuticorin and Colombo.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Irrigation Facilities in U.P.

349. SHRI D.P. YADAV : Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether there are many schemes under consideration of the Government in regard to increasing irrigation facilities in Uttar Pradesh;

(b) if so, the extent of area of drought prone region which would have been provided irrigation facility by the end of Eighth Five Year Plan; and

(c) the target fixed for Ninth Five Year Plan in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) and (b) Nine new major irrigation projects of Uttar Pradesh are under appraisal. Besides providing irrigation benefits to other areas, these projects envisage irrigation benefits to the drought prone districts of Allahabad, Mirzapur, Hamirpur, Banda and Varanasi.

(c) The Ninth Five Year Plan has not been finalised by the Planning Commission.

[English]

U.P. Roadways Corporation

350. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Uttar Pradesh Roadways Corporation is running into huge financial loss;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and the steps being taken by the Government in this regard;

(c) whether the Uttar Pradesh Government owe large sums of money to the Corporation for hiring its buses; and

(d) if so, the amount of money due to the Corporation and by when the same will be paid to the Corporation ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (d) The Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of Lok Sabha.

Mahila Vikas Nigam in Assam

351. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Mahila Vikas Nigam has been constituted in Assam ;

(b) if so, the districts where the units thereof have been formed; and

(c) the works undertakan by the Nigam so far ?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R. BOMMAI) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Drugs Sold by Generic Name

352. SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether World Health Organisation has directed that the drugs should be sold by their generic name;

(b) whether the Government have decided to subscribe to this directive and if so, the reasons for pharmaceutical companies selling the same drugs under their own name; and

(c) the action the Government propose to take to curb this practice?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE : (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) In view of (a), do not arise.

[Translation]

Vacancies in Armed Forces

353. DR. BALIRAM :
SHRI MUKHTAR ANIS :
SHRI SUKHLAL KUSHWAHA :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of posts are lying vacant in different cadres of the defence forces;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to fill up the vacancies ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The vacancy position for three services is given below :

	Officers	JCOs/ORs/Airmen
Army	12,972	55,263
Navy	690	2,782
Air Force	1,045	5,876

(c) In the case of Army, whether the magnitude of vacancy is large, the Government has decided to implement a project for the 'Image Projection of Army' with the help of professional Media agencies to highlight the unique and positive features of Army as a fulfilling career to attract potential soldiers to join army. In the case of Navy and Air Force the Government is making all out efforts to encourage induction of young people in Navy and Air Force giving greater publicity in newspapers and media in order to get the best.

[English]

Shortage of Accommodation for Defence Personnel

354. SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is an acute shortage of accommodation in Delhi/New Delhi areas for defence personnel;

(b) if so, whether rents have gone up in Delhi so high as to force officers and men to live most unhygienic conditions;

(c) if so, whether rental ceilings were last revised in April 1988;

(d) if so, whether the present ceilings in 'A' class cities are so low that it is hardly possible for them to meet the expenditure involved; and

(e) if so, by when the rental ceilings are likely to be revised ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU) : (a) to (e) There is a shortage of residential accommodation for service personnel in Delhi/New Delhi. However the service HQrs. have been authorised to hire private accommodation for different categories of the service officers at rental ceiling prescribed for the purpose which was last revised in April, 1988 on the basis of the recommendations of the IVth Pay Commission. The existing rental ceilings for hiring accommodation at Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta for Brigadier and above is Rs. 2100/-, Major to Colonel is Rs. 1900/-, Captain and below is 1800/- JCOs is Rs. 750/- and for NCOs and ORs is Rs. 500/-. The scales are likely to be revised on the recommendations of the Vth Pay Commission.

Agency Charges for Works on National Highways

355. SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVINCHANDRA MEHTA : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether a request from Government of Maharashtra for increase in agency charges for original/maintenance and repair works relating to national highways has been pending for more than a decade with the Union Governments;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the corrective measures taken/likely to be taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) No, Sir.